

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 03284 191304Z
ACTION HA-05

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TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE BOAT CASE - GREEK SHIP LYDIA

REF: ATHENS 3169, STATE 97969

1. OWNER OF M/V LYDIA, MR. GEORGIADIS, VISITED EMBASSY TODAY TO EXPRESS PUZZLEMENT OVER WHAT HE SEES AS CONFLICT BETWEEN USG EXHORTATION FOR MERCHANT SHIPPING TO RESCUE VIETNAMESE BOAT REFUGEES AND USG'S APPARENT UNWILLINGNESS ASSIST IN DISCHARGING THE 51 VIETNAMESE FROM HIS SHIP AT MAMBASA. M/V LYDIA WAS SCHEDULED TO LEAVE MAMBASA APRIL 19 UNDER CHARTER FOR VOYAGE TO DURBAN, CAPE TOWN, AND VENEZUELA. FACED WITH APPARENT INABILITY DISCHARGE REFUGEES AT MAMBASA, AND LIKELIHOOD THEY ALSO WOULD BE REJECTED AT DURBAN AND CAPE TOWN, GEORGIADIS STATES IT WOULD APPEAR ONLY SOLUTION WOULD BE FOR HIM TO CANCEL EXISTING CHARTER, AND TAKE NEW CHARTER FOR RUN TO FAR EAST AND WHERE REFUGEES COULD BE OFFLOADED AT VIETNAMESE PORT.

2. MR. GEORGIADIS WAS ASSURED OF USG'S INTEREST IN VIETNAMESE BOAT CASES, AND COMPLIMENTED ON FINE HUMANITARIAN ACTION OF MASTER AND CREW OF M/V LYDIA, AND HIMSELF FOR RESCUING REFUGEES IN
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PAGE 02 ATHENS 03284 191304Z

ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW AND BEST TRADITION OF SEA-GOING MEN. IN ADDITION IT WAS EXPLAINED TO MR. GEORGIADIS THAT UNDER AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAW USG CANNOT GIVE GUARANTEE FOR RESETTLEMENT IN THE U.S. OF REFUGEES OR IMMIGRANTS PRIOR TO INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY UNDER IMMIGRATION ACT. GEORGIADIS WAS ASSURED, HOWEVER, THAT USG IS DOING ALL IT CAN TO ASSIST UNHCR, AND TO ENCOURAGE GOK TO PERMIT DISEMBARKAT-

ION AT MAMBASA. PROCEDURE THROUGH WHICH UNHCR AND ICEM ARRANGE FOR TEMPORARY CARE OF REFUGEES AT PROCESSING CENTERS IN EUROPE, INCLUDING LAVRION, GREECE, WAS DESCRIBED TO MR. GEORGIADIS. GEORGIADIS SAID THAT HE HAS BEEN INFORMED THROUGH MINISTRY MERCHANT MARINE AND FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT GOG REFUSAL TO PERMIT VIETNAMESE TO BE SENT TO LAVRION IS PREDICATED ON NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE CURRENTLY AT LAVRION, AND FAILURE OF UNHCR AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO ARRANGE PROMPT RESETTLEMENT. FYI A NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE HAVE BEEN AT LAVRION FOR SEVERAL MONTHS OWING THEIR INABILITY PASS MEDICAL EXAMS RE TUBERCULOSIS AND SYPHILIS. END FYI.

3. DURING CONVERSATION WITH GEORGIADIS, A TELEPHONE CALL TO UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE ELICITED INFORMATION THAT CANADA HAS JUST AGREED TO ACCEPT 25 OF THE 51 REFUGEES, AND FRANCE TO ACCEPT 9. ACCORDING TO UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE THE 34 WILL PRESUMABLY TRAVEL DIRECTLY FROM KENYA TO RECEIVING COUNTRIES. THE 17 REMAINING REFUGEES WILL BE SUBJECT OF DEMARCHE TO GOG BY UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE AS SOON AS HE CAN ARRANGE AN APPOINTMENT AT FOREIGN MINISTRY.

4. MR. GEORGIADIS LEFT EMBASSY EXPRESSING APPRECIATION, AND AFFIRMING THAT HIS VESSELS WILL BE INSTRUCTED, NOTWITHSTANDING CURRENT PROBLEMS, TO CONTINUE TO OFFER ASSISTANCE TO VIETNAMESE BOAT CASES.

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PAGE 03 ATHENS 03284 191304Z

5. ABOVE INTERVIEW IS CITED AT LENGTH FOR DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION, AS SUCH PROBLEMS AS FACED BY CREW AND OWNER OF M/V LYDIA QUICKLY BECOME COMMON KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER SHIP OWNERS AND MASTERS, AND SUBSEQUENTLY ADD TO THE NUMBER OF VESSELS WHICH IGNORE REFUGEE BOATS. WE UNDERSTAND INFORMALLY THAT AS MANY AS 29 SHIPS PASSED THIS GROUP BEFORE RESCUE BY M/V LYDIA. AS MEANS OF ENCOURAGING RESCUE OF BOAT REFUGEES, DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO PUBLICIZE AND COMMEND CREWS AND OWNERS WHO DO CARRY OUT HUMANITARIAN RESPONSIBILITIES. MCCLOSKEY

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